

# Evaluation of the Peer Mediation Programme in Castlerea Prison

February 2019

Consensus Research



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
agus Comhionannais  
Department of Justice  
and Equality

st.stephen's green trust

Travellers in Prison Initiative

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#### List of Abbreviations

TMS	Traveller Mediation Service
ETB	Education and Training Board
PMP	Peer Mediation Programme
RC	Red Cross
TPI	Travellers in Prison Initiative
IPS	Irish Prison Service
PO	Prison Officer

## 1. Introduction

The Peer Mediation programme for Travellers in Castlerea Prison was piloted in 2016/17 with the aim of preventing and reducing the level of conflict in Castlerea. It is linked to a wider programme of support for Travellers in the prison system where Travellers are heavily over represented. The Travellers in Prison Initiative (TPI) was established to respond to the distinctive needs of Travellers in Irish prisons. Its aim is to embed positive change in policy and practice across four key areas; 1) Building a knowledge base about Travellers in prison, 2) Increasing and improving access to prison-based services for Travellers, 3) Strengthening supports for families of Travellers in prison, and after prison, using a multi-agency approach, 4) Strengthening self-identity and self-advocacy for Travellers in prison by mainstreaming a peer-support model.

The Traveller Mediation Service was designed to promote and deliver conflict prevention and intervention skills, training and capacity building to a range of organisations and groups around the country. It was set up in 2009 and works to mediate conflicts between Travellers, between Travellers & Agencies, and between Travellers and the Settled Community. It is a partnership initiative, supported by Restorative Justice in the Community (RJC), funded by the Department of Justice and Equality. The TMS provides a range of supports and services including proactively responding to, and working to resolve, conflicts using mediation and other conflict intervention strategies where appropriate, engaging with, building and strengthening relationships with Traveller families, Traveller organisations, and with organisations in which Travellers participate, by interacting and engaging with all the relevant statutory agencies and by implementing alternative dispute resolution through capacity building and training of Travellers and those working with them.

The Peer Mediation Programme (PMP) in Castlerea Prison was initially run in 2016/7 as a pilot programme with the aim of empowering inmates with the skills and confidence to effectively communicate through peer to peer interaction with inmates who are experiencing conflict and violence in prison.

This evaluation was designed to document and assess how the PMP has developed since the evaluation of its initial pilot phase in Castlerea and to examine how this service could be extended across the Irish Prison Service. The objectives of the evaluation were to;

- Evaluate any outcomes and impacts of peer mediation in Castlerea Prison on, the prisoner population (in particular the Traveller prison population), the prison environment and on the families of prisoners /the wider community
- Evaluate the effectiveness of peer mediation methods in Castlerea
- Consider the influence of the wider prison environment as well as the non-prison environment (including issues affecting Travellers) on the delivery of peer mediation
- Document any learning from the process
- Make recommendations regarding the future development of Peer mediation in Castlerea and across the Irish prison system.

### **The Evaluation Process**

The evaluation was carried out over a two-month period from mid Nov 2018 to Mid-January 2019 and involved the following;

- A review of relevant documents, course evaluations etc
- Interviews with key stakeholders including TMS staff, Peer mediators, members of the project steering group, Red Cross, Irish Prison Service (IPS) Traveller in Prison Initiative (TPI) and Education and Training Board (ETB) staff
- Focus groups and interviews with prisoners in Castlerea prison
- Attendance at Steering group meeting for peer mediation training session in Castlerea

The evaluation used triangulation<sup>1</sup> to ensure the validity of findings with the emphasis of gathering and cross-referencing data from different sources (prisoners, TMS staff and trainers, and other stakeholders).

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<sup>1</sup> Triangulation facilitates validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources.

## 2. Overview of the Peer Mediation Programme

The Peer mediation programme for Travellers in Castlerea prison has been operating since 2016 and been implemented by a partnership of key stakeholders including the Irish Prison Service (IPS) the Education and Training Board (ETB) and the Traveller Mediation Service (TMS). The aim of the initiative is to empower inmates with the skills and confidence to effectively communicate through peer to peer interaction with inmates who are experiencing conflict and violence in the prison.

The programme was developed due to concerns about the high levels of conflict and violence among prisoners in Castlerea prison which has a particularly high number of Travellers. The Irish Red Cross, with the support of the ETB teaching staff, implemented a peer led Violence Reduction programme to raise awareness of conflict and violence targeting both prisoners and IPS staff. This programme is part of the overall Red Cross Community Based Health Programme which is delivered in all prisons. It is a partnership between the RC, IPS and ETB, and in Castlerea the main focus was on conflict awareness and violence prevention. This programme was found to be helpful in the prison and stakeholders identified the need for more work in this area. The programme provides a foundation for the peer mediation programme as it raises awareness of conflict and violence among prisoners and open up opportunities for the prisoners and IPS staff to look at conflict together. The fact that it is peer led is also significant as this provides a platform for the peer led mediation programme delivered by TMS.

Following discussions between the ETB staff, the Traveller Mediation Service, the TPI, and senior staff in Castlerea prison, it was decided that there was a need for ongoing work in dealing with conflict and preventing violence in the prison. The pilot peer mediation programme was developed and implemented in 2016 comprising two six-week courses. Prisoners received a certificate of participation on completion of this first module. A further two programmes were delivered in 2017 and four in 2018; two in the main prison block and two in the Grove housing area in the prison.

The key elements of the pilot programme were;

- The training was delivered in partnership involving, TMS, ETB staff in the school in Castlerea and IPS staff. A steering group was established to oversee the delivery of the programme.
- The pilot course was delivered by TMS staff
- The programme comprised a 3.5 hours programme run one day per week, for six weeks.
- The course was based on the five step mediation model and involved role play of conflict situations both from prison settings and from outside the prison.
- While the programme was not a Traveller-specific course, it did have a strong involvement of Travellers and a focus on Traveller culture. Twenty one prisoners signed up for the pilot programme (11 of whom were Travellers).
- Sixteen of the twenty one completed the original six week programme. Participants received a certificate of attendance.
- The programme was later extended at the request of participants and a further six week advanced training was provided to those who wished to take part. Eight participants took part in this advanced training programme (seven of whom were Travellers).

**Commented [AC1]:** See above- was there 2 x 6 weeks training and then a further 4 weeks? Not clear. What was purpose of extra 4 weeks?

- Participants on this second module were assessed by an external accredited mediator (Mediators' Institute of Ireland). This group received a Certificate in Mediation which allowed them to offer peer mediator in the prison.

The pilot programme was evaluated in May 2017 and a new programme was rolled out over the period Sep 2017 to Dec 2018. The key elements of this programme were;

- A further 4 courses of six week duration were delivered over this period (two in the main block and two in the Grove Housing complex).
- A further three courses of the advanced module have since been completed, with a total of thirteen participants receiving their assessment certificates in Castlerea.
- The programme was delivered by two teams of Traveller mediators who had successfully completed a 12 month Mediation training course (a programme developed by TMS in partnership with the Edward Kennedy Institute in Maynooth University and the ETB, and accredited by the Mediators Institute of Ireland).
- There has been an increasing diversity among prisoners taking part with around 50% Travellers and the other 50% comprising a mix of settled Irish and non-national prisoners (African, East European & Brazilian).

Course content summary provided in Appendix 3

### 3. Main findings

#### Relevance

The evaluation has found that the PMP is highly relevant to the context in Castlerea Prison due to fact that it is Traveller led and that there is the high number of Travellers in the prison. It is also particularly relevant due to the level of conflict which exists and the close link between feuds/conflict in the Traveller community and conflict in the prison. It also addresses several other sources of conflict, including ongoing tension and conflict among prisoners and conflict between prisoners and POs. The initiative is also relevant to the overall aim and remit of the TMS due to the interconnected nature of feuds in the Traveller community and conflict in the prison system. It is recognised that there is a link between these feuds and the family members in the prisons. Prisoners highlighted the risk of escalation pointing out that “families know what is going on inside and peoples’ families. They know if the feud is stopped or ongoing in prison.” They also pointed out the increased risks of conflict in a prison setting “in prison little things become big things”. The Mediation trainers are conscious of the level of interconnectedness between events in the wider Traveller community and in the prison including the extension of feuds and conflict which arise where Travellers are suspected of providing information or giving evidence that has led to a conviction. Research by Irish Penal Reform Trust<sup>2</sup> on Travellers in prison identified some of the risks around conflict in prisons “While fighting in prison was not necessarily seen as the norm, some male interviewees shared a strong awareness that its risk was real. If a relative was involved in a conflict in prison, that could increase the likelihood of being attacked”. It also noted that “in the context of prison, Travellers from different families being placed in close proximity to each other increased the likelihood of ‘feud’ related fighting taking place”.

Therefore, any initiative which is aiming to prevent and mitigate conflict is highly relevant to this context and to the lives of the prisoners and IPS staff. Travellers from different groups who are imprisoned over feud related violence can end up in the same prison with a serious risk of further conflict in the prison and the potential for this to derail efforts to resolve the feud outside. The PMP attempts to break this cycle and has worked with Travellers involved in these disputes and working to change mindsets and attitudes. However, the service aims to work with all Travellers and does not specifically target those involved in feuds. The mediation approach is based on several key elements, changing mindsets and attitudes around violence, building trust, providing space for prisoners to talk about conflict and building the confidence of prisoners to understand and deal with conflict in their lives.

The context in prison is often tense and challenging for the prisoners, prison staff and teachers, and small incidents can quickly escalate into violence. Given the culture in prisons there are limited opportunities for prisoners to open up about these problems and to discuss issues around conflict and how to deal with it more effectively. The PMP training is relevant in this regard as it provides a safe space for both Travellers and other prisoners to talk about conflict, both inside the prison and on the outside. Providing prisoners with the opportunity to reflect and to look for alternative to violence can

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<sup>2</sup> Travellers in the Irish Prison System; A qualitative Study. Irish Penal Reform Trust 2014



be helpful in diffusing tension and changing the culture of conflict escalating into violence among prisoners.

### **Effectiveness**

Effectiveness looks at the extent to which the programme has achieved its objectives or is likely to do so and the key factors either facilitating this or limiting progress. The PMP aims to empower inmates with the skills and confidence to effectively communicate through peer to peer interaction with inmates who are experiencing conflict and violence in prison. The programme has a strong focus on confidence building, changing mindsets and attitudes to violence and providing alternatives to the cycle of violence and revenge. The programme has made good progress and overall it has contributed to the development of a “culture of mediation” among prisoners. This is reflected in the interest in the programme among both Travellers and other prisoners and the request for additional training and in the fact that prisoners are aware of and open to using other ways to prevent and resolve conflicts. There is anecdotal evidence of prisoners using the skills from the programme to intervene in situations of tension and conflict and that prisoners who have participated in the programme are more reflective and more aware of the importance of listening and looking for alternatives to conflict and violence. The fact that the two programmes (the RC conflict prevention course and the PMP) are working towards broadly similar aims means it is not possible to directly attribute this to the PMP. However, the key is that the programmes are complementing each other and contributing to a more stable and peaceful atmosphere in the prison.

The main objective was to “empower inmates with skills and confidence to effectively communicate through peer to peer interaction with inmates who are experiencing conflict and violence in the prison”. Based on consultations with prisoners who have participated and with ETB staff, it is clear that there is an openness and a confidence among participants to discuss conflict and to communicate with fellow inmates about violence reduction.

Both Travellers and other prisoners have engaged in the programme and appear to be motivated and willing to participate in further training and to proactively engage to prevent and resolve conflict in the prison. The PMP has been effective at two levels, with the prisoners and through the development of an interdisciplinary approach to dealing with conflict in the prison. It has built trust with the prisoners (both Traveller and others) and created some sense of ownership about these issues among participants. In addition, the training itself provides a safe space where these prisoners can discuss issues around conflict both in the prison and in their own lives. These are significant achievements given the context in which the programme has been implemented, the reality of prison life and the background and life experience of the prisoners. It has also raised awareness among prisoners (particularly Traveller prisoners) about the role of Travellers in resolving conflicts. The interdisciplinary approach has created a partnership between the mediators from TMS, the teachers from the ETB and the staff of the IPS and the prison chaplain. The establishment of the Project steering committee which involves all key stakeholders (TMS, ETB, IPS, TPI and Red Cross) provides a formal structure to address issues around conflict and to develop collaborative approaches between the different stakeholders. At a wider level the initiative has helped to raise awareness of the potential of peer mediation in prisons, and put this on the agenda at national level.

It is difficult to verify and quantify the number of incidents dealt with and resolved, as some of the work to prevent conflict or de-escalate a situation goes on behind the scenes, and is often not

recorded. In the initial phase the staff did keep a record of interventions and conflicts resolved which indicated that prisoners were resolving conflict on a regular basis. In the first phase of the programme in 2016/2017 reports indicate that prisoners on the peer mediation programme were involved in resolving up to fifty incidents and helped resolve potential conflicts between prisoners. However, it appears that the number of interventions has decreased and that the process of tracking these events has not been sustained. It is not clear why this happened, and it appears that a combination of factors have contributed.

One of the issues which emerged is the nature of the intervention by the prisoners. A room was provided for mediation but this does not appear to have been feasible in the prison context and there were logistical difficulties in setting up formal mediation processes. However, some mediation is taking place but more informally, in the yard, and the gym and in the evening. This includes some shuttle mediation where the mediator talks separately to both sides in the dispute and helps calm things down without any formal meetings taking place. The opportunity to engage in a structured mediation programme has been limited and most of the interventions appear to be more informal conflict coaching<sup>3</sup>. This approach can be effective in preventing conflict and diffusing a tense situation. The key is providing a “way out for prisoners so that they don’t lose face”. The intervention of another prisoner – “the fair play man” (a term used by both prisoners and trainers) can be critical in this by enabling prisoners to step back and avoid violence. However, this does have implications for the training provided by TMS and how the work of the programme is monitored and evaluated. To date the training has focused on a more formal, structured mediation process where both parties are engaged, and the emphasis has been on tracking actual disputes where the prisoners intervened. The priority is to prevent tension and conflict from escalating and it appears that this more informal approach is better suited to the prison context and that it is effective in resolving issues that can become violent. The PMP should examine how it can tailor its courses to the reality in the prison and assess if there are other skills and approaches that could strengthen this more informal mediation and conflict coaching work.

The key factors which have contributed to its effectiveness include; the central role played by Travellers particularly Traveller women who have been providing the training in Castlereagh. Three of the five Travellers trainers were females. This is an important learning for Traveller men and the wider prison population and demonstrates the key role that women can play in preventing and resolving conflict both in the prison and outside. Other important factors were: the support provided by ETB staff who provide direct support during the training and ongoing follow up with the prisoners involved; the involvement of prisoners in the design of the programme; the inclusive nature of the programme which facilitates a mix of prisoners (Traveller, settled Irish, and non-national prisoners) to participate and explore common problems both in the prison and in their lives outside. These discussions also expose other prisoners to Traveller culture.

The first course was delivered by TMS staff (a mix team of settled and Traveller). Follow up courses have been delivered mainly by Travellers from the TMS combined with Travellers who had completed a mediation training course at the Kennedy Institute, Maynooth University. Five mediators have been

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<sup>3</sup> Community Law and Mediation defines Conflict Coaching as “a structured process that helps people, on a one to one basis, to develop their skills to effectively engage in and manage interpersonal conflict” <http://www.communitylawandmediation.ie/consumer->

involved to date (2 male and 3 female). The fact that Travellers have been so centrally involved in the delivery of the programme has been important as it develops positive role models and demonstrates that Travellers can resolve conflicts. It also bridges the gap between the Travellers in Castlereagh and the work of the TMS with wider Traveller community. Travellers who have participated in the programme get a good insight into the TMS and build relationships with the Traveller trainers. There is potential to build on this and there are some examples of Travellers who have engaged with the TMS on their release. This is an area where there seems to be potential for further development.

One of the key strengths of the programme has been the inclusive nature of the training. The PMP encourages the prisoners to contribute to the design of the course. It facilitates a mix of prisoners ( Traveller, settled Irish and non-national prisoners) to participate and explore common problems both in the prison and in their lives outside. These discussions also expose other prisoners to Traveller culture and the challenges faced by Travellers both in prison and society.

The course is Traveller led and has a strong focus on conflict in the Traveller community. However, it has catered for both Travellers and settled prisoners and the emphasis on role play and discussions has facilitated prisoners with literacy problems. Having space to discuss conflict and ways of dealing with it has helped build relationships between Travellers and settled and raised awareness among prisoners about Traveller culture and the challenges faced by Travellers both in the prison and outside. The prisoners have a good level of input and are consulted and TMS and others have responded to their requests. For example, the programme was extended when prisoners requested this and further discussions are taking place around an accredited programme -again this was requested by past participants on the PMP.

The initial programme generated a lot of interest and enthusiasm in the prison, among the prisoners, teachers and IPS staff and participants were quite visible and active in their role as peer mediators. However, there is a view that the programme lost momentum in recent times and that it is not as visible or effective as it had been. It is not clear why this is the case but may be as a result of a combination of factors which were identified by prisoners and by ETB and IPS staff. The level of buy in and engagement by IPS staff is a key factor in the roll out of a mediation processes and there is a perception that this has declined in the second phase. The concept of peer mediation has been welcomed by IPS management and senior officers in Castlereagh Prison but there is less buy in by rank and file POs. There is a perception among the prisoners involved in the programme and among the Mediation trainers that there is a lack of buy in by POs. that they are not interested in it. These stakeholders noted that the programme was “not taken seriously by POs”, of not “being given credence by PO” that “POs didn’t really understand mediation” that “POs feel threatened by it “and talked of the “need for POs to retain their power”.

It is recognised that logistical issues plus staff shortage and turnover are also factors. One of the key values of mediation is empowerment and in a prison context this can be viewed as a problem due to power dynamics. Senior IPS staff consulted are positive about the programme overall but are concerned about how cases would be referred for mediation and the type of issues that prisoners would take on to mediate. For example mediating in cases where violence has occurred.

It appears that the programme was more noticeable in the earlier phase but lost some of its momentum and has become less visible in the prison. This may be due to the fact that type of mediation has shifted and is now being done quietly among the prisoners. The personality of the

participants themselves and group dynamics and their willingness to promote the concept in the prison was an important factor in the visibility of the programme and the change in participants may have contributed to the sense that it is not as prominent now.

The evaluation of the Peer Mediation pilot carried out in May 2017<sup>4</sup> identified a number of important issues which are still pertinent in the current iterations of the programme. Some of the key issues were; the need to raise awareness among both prisoners and staff, the importance of clarity around its scope and boundaries and the need to manage expectations about what it can achieve. Some of the challenges which have emerged particularly around the interface between peer mediators and POs and the expectations of the participants may be due to a lack of clarity around these points and there is merit in revisiting these in all courses.

There are also some issues raised by prisoners and ETB staff and confirmed by evaluators observations about the peer mediation training, including the type of training being provided, the capacity of the tutors and the methodology used as well as logistical and planning issues. The involvement of Travellers as trainers is one of the strengths of the programme but there are concerns about the level of experience of trainers and their capacity to teach mediation skills in this context. There appears to be a lot of repetition in the programme and an over reliance on the five steps. Prisoners are keen to get more background on mediation, examples of good practice in mediation and a wider variety of training methodologies. One prisoner noted that “we are learning the steps without knowing the meaning” .

As outlined above the prisoners have mainly been involved in conflict coaching with limited scope to engage in structured mediation processes. In light of this it may be more effective to provide participants with training in this area instead of or alongside the mediation training. The breaks in the programme and delays in getting started cause frustration among prisoners and the short classes also limit the scope for prisoners to really engage on these issues.

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<sup>4</sup> Midland Traveller Conflict Mediation Initiative; Evaluation Report; Tanya Lalor May 2017

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

There are inherent difficulties around attribution in all conflict programmes and particular challenges in measuring the impact of preventative work. The peer mediation programme is about creating a culture of mediation and conflict prevention and a lot of the work by the prisoners is informal behind the scenes efforts to reduce tension and prevent violence. Despite the difficulties in measuring, there are indications that the Peer mediation programme is having a positive impact. Stakeholders in the prison agree that the initiative has contributed to a reduction in the level of conflict and violence. The prisoners themselves feel that it has helped them both to step back from potential conflict situations and to use the skills and approaches from the course to resolve conflict among other prisoners. In this regard the programme is much more than a course as it provides a life skill which can have a long-term impact on prisoner behaviour and also help prisoners to deal with challenges when released. There is a close link between events in the prison and the tensions and feuds in the Traveller community with an ongoing risk of conflict in one place spreading and escalating in the other. The peer mediation programme has helped to break this cycle and improving relationships and preventing violence inside does impact on behaviour in the wider Traveller community outside. Travellers in the community are aware that prisoners are meeting with former enemies and engaging around conflict and this helps ease tension both on the ground outside and in prison.

Overall the evaluation has found that the Peer Mediation programme had been effective and has made a positive contribution to the prison despite the challenging context. It has established a good platform and become normalised in the prison context with a good level of interest among both Traveller and settled prisoners. The teaching staff have supported the initiative and play an important role in the delivery of the programme. The steering group is an effective model of working and provides the foundation for an integrated approach to dealing with conflict in the prison.

There is potential to strengthen and develop the peer mediation programme in Castlerea and also potential to expand the programme to other prisons. The evaluation has identified a need to develop all aspects of the programme from the planning/preparation phase, the programme delivery phase and to explore how it could be further developed in order to provide more structured follow up initiatives when participants are released.

Given the critical role of the ETB staff in the programme and the need for increased buy in and engagement by IPS staff the TMS should examine the feasibility of delivering mediation training for staff in Castlerea. This will present challenges due to logistics and staff turnover but it would ensure a more strategic and holistic approach and develop a stronger model which could be replicated in other prisons. There is also a need to engage more closely with IPS staff both to increase awareness about the potential benefits of the programme (both in the prison and outside) and to deal with some of the tensions around the operation of the programme in the prison. As part of this the TMS and IPS should draw up protocols to ensure that both prisoners and staff are clear about the process involved in peer mediation, the responsibilities of the parties and the limitations to what prisoners can actually take on to mediate.

The Red Cross Community Based Health programme is implemented through a partnership approach between the Red Cross, the ETB and IPS and provided training on violence reduction/conflict

prevention in all prisons. The Castlereagh programme is geared towards the context in the prison and the high percentage of Travellers there. This is also a peer led programme which is based on the reality of life in the prison and aims to raise awareness about conflict and to provide opportunities to discuss and reflect on conflict and how they deal with it. The programme provides a good foundation for the peer mediation programme and there is potential for increased co-ordination across these two initiatives particularly in the area conflict coaching. There is also scope for increased linkages between these programmes dealing with conflict and the intercultural programme delivered in the prison. The Red Cross also has a strong focus on the transition from prison to community and has developed initiatives to facilitate prisoners in this process. This transition is also critical for Travellers particularly those that have been involved in conflict and feuds. The skills developed through the peer mediation programme can be very important in breaking the cycle of conflict among Travellers. The TMS has been looking at this area and how to link Travellers from the programme into other community-based programme on their release. There is potential for the TMS to collaborate with the Red Cross and TPI in the development of a Traveller specific prison to community initiative which would provide those coming out of prison with a structure to continue their work and training on conflict prevention and mediation. This would be particularly important if a more advanced accredited course is developed in Castlereagh as the prisoners from this course would be well placed to continue their work in the Traveller community.

The TMS is currently examining two major developments of the programme; developing an accredited Diploma programme in Mediation in partnership with the Edward Kennedy institute in Maynooth University and expanding the peer mediation programme to other prisons. Providing a full assessment of these proposals is beyond the scope of this evaluation. However, a number of points related to these proposals did emerge in discussions with stakeholders.

The current and past participants are enthusiastic about the PMP and there is a clear interest in further training and in some cases in certification. There is merit in the programme providing a more advanced course with certification for prisoners who have successfully completed the current modules. However, this will present challenges and needs to be carefully planned. A programme of this nature would normally require written assignments and opportunities to practice mediation. Both of these will be difficult in the Castlereagh context particularly for some Travellers who have weak literacy. There is a risk that a course of this nature could exclude some of the participants who are capable and committed and undermine the overall programme. As outlined in this report the involvement of ETB and IPS staff is key to the current programme and would be even more important in the delivery of a more advanced programme. Strengthening the partnership between the three agencies would be critical to this proposed development. Prisoners would need opportunities to apply the new skills in the prison context and this has already proved difficult. Therefore, careful consideration is needed on how the prisoners could actually use the learning and the implications for IPS staff.

There is increasing interest in the peer mediation model in other prisons and the TMS is already delivering training in Loughan House prison. The programme has contributed to a reduction in conflict in Castlereagh and this approach could make a valuable contribution to conflict prevention/violence reduction in other prisons. There is a good level of complementarity with the Red Cross programme which is already being delivered in all prisons through a network of up to 300 volunteers. There are a number of issues to be considered regarding this proposal. One is the capacity of the TMS to deliver a

wider programme while also developing the programme in Castlerea and delivering ongoing mediation services to the wider Traveller community. There is a risk of overextending the services and damaging the core services being delivered at present. A second issue is the relevance of a Traveller led programme in prisons where there are lower number of Travellers and/or where Travellers are not identifying themselves. A Traveller led programme might not be appropriate or feasible in these contexts even where there was a need. However, there is merit in investigating how the learning and experience from Castlerea could be applied to a wider peer mediation programme in other prisons. The Red Cross panel of volunteers and the strong partnership between TMS, the RC, the ETBs and the IPS would provide a good platform to develop a programme. This would allow the TMS to ensure that a strong Traveller perspective was built into the programme and for TMS personnel to deliver modules of the course where there was an interest and need.

A key issue going forward is getting increased engagement and buy in from the POs so that the work of the prisoners is recognised and valued. The programme has provided some information and training to IPS staff and there is merit in strengthening this and ensuring that as many IPS staff are familiar with the programme and its benefits. The Red Cross model is based on a strong partnership with the IPS and all PO receive training on this programme.

There is consensus among both prisoners and other stakeholders that the PMP has made a positive contribution in Castlerea. However much of this appears to be preventative work behind the scenes and is therefore difficult to quantify. It would be important that the contribution of the initiative to stability in the prison could be monitored and tracked. The main stakeholders (the IPS, ETB, TMS, the Chaplain and prisoners) should identify some collective outcomes i.e. clear, quantifiable, measurable and achievable results which can be monitored by different stakeholders. This should be broader than counting actual mediation interventions and include results that contribute to wider more respectful relationships, openness of prisoners to look for alternatives and examples of preventative work. It is recognised that much of this is not countable and therefore other qualitative method such as the Most Significant change<sup>5</sup> or other narrative approaches may be more useful. The key is that evidence is gathered on these collective outcomes and the POs become more aware of the value of the programme and its potential in the prison. This should shift the focus from counting the number of conflicts dealt with or resolved to a wider focus on the overall goals of the programme; communications between prisoners, the contribution to a stable prison, a reduction in violent incidents and improved relationship among prisoners and between prisoners and POs.

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<sup>5</sup> The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation. Project stakeholders are involved both in deciding the sorts of change to be recorded and in analysing the data. It involves generating and analysing personal accounts of change and deciding which of these accounts is the most significant – and why.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendations to the Traveller Mediation Service**

1. The TMS should review the structure of the peer mediation programme and curriculum and put increased emphasis on conflict coaching either as part of the mediation course or as a separate module.
2. The TMS should build the capacity of Traveller mediators in mediation training skills (e.g. learning styles, presentation skills, facilitation skills, working with challenging participants) and in conflict coaching, and/or widen the panel of trainers so that other external mediation trainers and conflict coaches can be brought in for sections of the programme.
3. The TMS should work with the Kennedy Institute to develop an appropriate accredited programme which takes into account the literacy levels of the prisoners, the challenges around gaining practical experience and the fact that prisoners can be transferred or released over the course of a longer programme.
4. The TMS should provide Mediation training for ETB and where possible IPS staff to raise awareness about peer mediation and facilitate enhanced collaboration
5. The TMS should investigate how it can collaborate with the Red Cross on:
  - a. Closer co-ordination between the two programmes in Castlerea examining how the different strands (conflict awareness/violence prevention, conflict coaching and peer mediation) could be delivered in a joined-up way.
  - b. the potential to develop a Traveller prison to community programme focusing on conflict prevention/mediation linking in with the Probation Service, and TPI.
  - c. How best to develop a wider peer mediation programme in other prisons incorporating the learning and experience from work in Castlerea and building on the experience of the Red Cross volunteers in these prisons.
6. The TMS should work with IPS to develop protocols around mediation in Castlerea and ensure clarity about roles and responsibilities in future delivery of the programme.
7. The TMS should work with relevant stakeholders (IPS, TPI and RC and relevant ETBs) to promote the concept of peer mediation and conflict coaching in other prisons particularly the learning emerging from Castlerea, while recognising the challenges involved in the roll out of a complex national programme of this nature.

### **Additional recommendation**

8. The IPS should continue to promote the concept of peer mediation and its benefits (both in the prison and in the wider Traveller community) among all staff and encourage staff to participate in awareness raising and training delivered by the TMS to promote and strengthen collaboration.
9. The St. Stephen's Green Trust should continue to support this initiative both financially and through ongoing participation in the project steering group and if possible, support the further development of the programme in Castlerea including the proposed accredited course.
10. The key stakeholders and the prisoners should identify collective outcomes and put in place a structured system that can easily and effectively monitor the work of the programme and its contribution to violence reduction and stability in the prison.



## Appendix 1

### List of people consulted:

#### Current and past participants on the Peer Mediation Programme

<b>Aileen O'Brien</b>	Traveller Mediation Service
<b>Chris McDonagh</b>	Traveller Mediation Service
<b>Frank Kavanagh</b>	Traveller Mediation Service
<b>Lily Kavanagh</b>	Peer Mediation Trainer
<b>Caroline Nevin</b>	Peer Mediation Trainer
<b>Christine Joyce</b>	Peer Mediation Trainer
<b>Bernie Downes</b>	Education and Training Board
<b>Karen Donoghue</b>	Education and Training Board
<b>Peter Fleming</b>	Education and Training Board
<b>Anne Costello</b>	St. Stephens Green Trust: Travellers in Prison Initiative
<b>Graham Betts-Symonds</b>	Irish Red Cross
<b>Peter Perry</b>	Irish Prison Service
<b>Margaret Connaughton</b>	Prison Chaplain

## Appendix 2

### Terms of Reference for the evaluation of a peer mediation programme in Castlerea prison

<b>Background and context</b>	<p>This terms of reference concerns an evaluation of a peer mediation programme<sup>i</sup> for Travellers in Castlerea prison. It is commissioned by the Traveller Mediation Service (TMS)<sup>ii</sup> and supported by the St Stephen's Green Trust's Travellers in Prison Initiative (TPI)<sup>iii</sup></p> <p>The background to the initiative has its roots in 2014, when staff and inmates at Castlerea prison identified the high levels of conflict and violence amongst prisoners as an issue of concern. Travellers who are Red Cross volunteers in the prison implemented a project to raise awareness about the issues of 'conflict and violence'<sup>6</sup> This entailed the facilitation of workshops with the support of teaching staff on the issue of conflict awareness. The workshops were attended by fellow inmates, Irish Prison Service (IPS) staff and external agencies.</p> <p>Following discussions between the Education and Training Board (ETB), the Traveller Mediation Service, the TPI, and senior staff in Castlerea prison, a peer mediation pilot programme was developed.</p> <p>The programme operated as a pilot initiative, with a plan to use the learning from the pilot to roll-out similar peer mediation programmes in other prisons.</p> <p>The aim of the peer mediation training was to empower inmates with the skills and confidence to effectively communicate through peer to peer interaction with inmates who are experiencing conflict and violence in the prison. In partnership with the 'school' (the ETB), the Irish Prison Service (IPS), and with the support of the TPI, TMS designed and delivered a training programme in peer mediation, delivered for 3.5 hours per day, one day per week, for six weeks (this training programme was later extended at the request of participants and a further four week advanced training was provided to those who wished to take part).</p> <p>While the programme was not a Traveller-specific course, it did involve a strong involvement of Travellers: the training was delivered jointly by the TMS, with a strong involvement of Travellers who are studying mediation in National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM), as well as by the ETB (the teachers in the school in Castlerea).</p> <p>21 participants signed up for the programme (11 of whom were Travellers). 16 of the 21 completed the original six week programme. Eight of these took part in the advanced training programme (seven of whom were Travellers), and of the group of eight, six successfully passed an assessment by a qualified mediator (who was accredited by the</p>
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<sup>6</sup> And who had participated in the Red Cross Conflict Awareness programme

	<p>Mediators' Institute of Ireland (MII) and were deemed qualified to act as peer mediators in the prison.</p> <p>As the pilot programme was delivered, a process evaluation was carried out, and this documented the process of the training and follow-up as it unfolded. The evaluation assessed and documented the set-up and implementation of the programme; reported the impacts on participants; identified factors contributing to the use of peer mediation in prison life.</p> <p>Amongst the key strengths of the pilot were</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The delivery of the training by Travellers: this enabled a focus on Traveller identity and how conflict impacts on the Traveller community. Participants noted that this resulted in high levels of Traveller participation in the training</li> <li>• The oversight structure: an advisory group met regularly and comprised senior prison staff (including governors), the Chaplain, TMS, the ETB, the IPS Psychologist, the TPI, and crucially, two representatives of peer mediator trainees (acknowledging their importance in the design and implementation of the programme).</li> </ul> <p>In terms of the pilot's impacts, peer mediators identified personal, prison and community impacts. Personal impacts included changes in how conflict was viewed and addressed (e.g. resulting in talking through issues), and reduced violence in the prison with the availability of peer mediation. Some participants expressed an interest in pursuing further (accredited) training on peer mediation, and continuing the practice post-release. Prison impacts included a view that there was a reduction in sanctions for breaches of prison discipline, and that there were improved relationships between prison staff and prisoners (arising from the co-operation in the delivery of the programme). In terms of community impacts, participants noted as conflict in the prison environment spilled over into the wider community, reduced conflict in prison similarly impacted on the wider community.</p> <p>The evaluation included ten recommendations for the further development of the peer mediation programme, and was completed in 2017.<sup>7</sup></p> <p>Since then, peer mediation has been ongoing in Castlerea prison on an informal and adhoc basis, and a number of basic peer-mediation training programmes have been completed, as well as follow-on training, and eight more prisoners have passed their assessments. TMS has also completed a peer mediation programme in the Grove<sup>8</sup> in 2018.</p> <p>The TMS now wishes to undertake an evaluation of the programme as it has developed since its pilot phase, and to document how peer mediation has developed in Castlerea prison, and how should the practice be extended and implemented across the Irish Prison Service.</p>
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<sup>7</sup> And is available at <https://www.ssgt.ie/grant-programme-reports/>

<sup>8</sup> A semi open facility containing conventional houses in Castlerea prison

<b>Objectives</b>	<p>The objectives of the evaluation are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluate any outcomes and impacts of peer mediation in Castlerea prison on <b>i)</b> the prisoner population (in particular the Traveller prisoner population), <b>ii)</b> the prison environment, and on <b>iii)</b> families of prisoners/ the wider community. This may include some of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcomes for prisoners who qualified as peer-mediators (e.g. enhanced capacity and confidence, improved safety, development of negotiation / conflict management skills, participation in education and prison life, etc)</li> <li>• Outcomes for prisoner population in Castlerea, in particular Traveller prisoners, prison staff, and the prison environment (e.g. improved relationships between Travellers and prison staff, changes in how conflict is managed and understood, greater engagement of prisoners with prison services (including education and training), greater understanding of Traveller culture amongst prison staff, etc.)</li> <li>• Outcomes for families / wider community (e.g. improved relationships between prisoners and their families; changes in how conflict arising in the prison impacts on the wider community, use of peer mediation skills gained on the wider community).</li> <li>• It is important that the evaluation capture unexpected impacts and outcomes, as well as expected outcomes and impacts of the programme, and that it considers how peer mediation can be used as a tool to achieve wider benefit.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Evaluate the use of peer mediation methods in Castlerea prison and their effectiveness. This should include such aspects as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How prisoners are recruited and trained as peer mediators</li> <li>○ The role of Traveller-led training and Traveller organisations in the programme</li> <li>○ How prisoners who are at risk of engaging (or who may have engaged) in conflict which may escalate into violence are identified and referred for peer mediation</li> <li>○ The practice, scope and outputs of peer mediation (including conflict coaching, formal dispute resolution and informal practice)</li> <li>○ Resources and supports required, and provided to peer mediators, and to the programme as a whole (including oversight / steering group structures)</li> <li>○ The role undertaken and expectations of peer mediators</li> <li>○ Capacity of peer mediation to address different conflict situations</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Consider the influence of the wider prison environment as well as the non-prison environment (including issues affecting Travellers) on the delivery of peer mediation</li> <li>4. Document any learning from the process and barriers arising that may influence the future of peer mediation in Castlerea prison or other prison environment</li> <li>5. Assess and document the factors giving rise to the outcomes and impacts identified, in order that these factors may contribute to the development of a model for the delivery of peer mediation in Irish prisons. In so doing, the evaluation will consider the potential for peer mediation practice to be applied in other prison environments.</li> <li>6. Make recommendations for training element of the peer mediation programme (as delivered by TMS and the ETB), as well as for the successful implementation of peer mediation in Castlerea and across the prison system in Ireland.</li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations should be directed at the TMS and ETB/Red Cross , and others including policy-makers, senior management and prison service providers, and they should detail the mechanisms and structures required in order to enable peer mediation to operate successfully</li> </ul>
<b>Issues</b>	
<b>Methodology</b>	<p>Methodology will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Documentary research and analysis of data</b> relating to the peer mediation activities (to include outputs such as the numbers of referrals to peer mediation; number of peer mediation sessions undertaken and their outcomes)</li> <li><b>Consultations</b> with prisoners (including Traveller prisoners who have participated in peer mediation as well as those who have not), peer mediators; prison staff and management; teachers and the head teacher of the Education and Training Board in Castlerea prison (the 'school'), the Traveller Mediation Service, the Travellers in Prison Initiative (TPI), Castlerea prison chaplain, the Irish Red Cross in Castlerea prison.</li> <li>It is envisaged that consultations may include focus groups and one to one interviews.</li> </ul>
<b>Expertise</b>	<p>The successful tenderer will be expected to have the following expertise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevant research experience, an understanding or experience of issues affecting the Traveller community, and a demonstrated commitment to equality and anti-racism;</li> <li>Experience and understanding of issues affecting Travellers (and in particular Travellers in prison/ criminal justice system)</li> <li>Understanding and experience of community development and peer mediation work, and working from an equality and anti-racist perspective</li> <li>Excellent interpersonal and communication skills</li> </ul> <p>Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expertise and prior experience of tenderers (30%)</li> <li>Proven track record in delivery of similar projects (25%)</li> <li>Quality of the proposal (25%)</li> <li>Cost (20%)</li> </ul>
<b>Reporting</b>	<p>The evaluator will be expected to work in a collaborative basis with the TPI, TMS and to report regularly on progress of the evaluation.</p> <p>Monthly written progress reports and monthly reporting meetings will be required, as well as regular telephone and email contact will be expected.</p>
<b>Management</b>	<p>The researcher will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring that ethical standards will be met throughout the research process</li> <li>Ensuring that data protection and confidentiality provisions will be met</li> <li>Ensuring that informed consent is sought from all those taking part in consultations, particularly prisoners</li> <li>Producing a tax clearance certificate on award of contract</li> </ul>

<b>Proposal Requirements</b>	<p>In no more than 2,000 words, proposals are invited in the following format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name and contact details of the tenderer / organisation and the person(s) who would be involved in the delivery of the work</li> <li>• Overall approach to the work and the tasks outlined in this proposal (including proposed methodology)</li> <li>• Previous experience of those involved in undertaking the work (copies of previous work can be attached to tender if preferred)</li> <li>• Costings for the work to be undertaken, including breakdown of number of days per task, daily rate, VAT, and any expenses</li> <li>• Timeframe for the completion of the evaluation</li> <li>• Contact details of two referees</li> </ul>
<b>Budget</b>	

<sup>i</sup> **Peer mediation** can be defined as: a dispute resolution process in which a neutral mediator assists the parties to a dispute in resolving a dispute between them (Kaufer et al, 2014). In peer mediation, the parties (to the dispute), with assistance from the peer mediators, consider possible ways to come up with their own solutions to manage or resolve issues. By exchanging information, expressing feelings and listening to each other's perception of the situation, parties are able to better understand another's point of view (McWilliam et al, 2016).

The Mediators' Institute of Ireland (MII) adds to this by describing mediation as 'a voluntary process of conflict resolution that allows the parties in dispute the opportunity to address their issues in a confidential and private environment'.

<sup>ii</sup> The **Traveller Mediation Service (TMS)** works to mediate conflicts between Travellers, between Travellers & Agencies, and between Travellers and the Settled Community. The service promotes and delivers conflict prevention and intervention skills training and capacity building to TMS stakeholders. It is a partnership initiative, supported by Restorative Justice in the Community (RJC), funded by the Department of Justice and Equality.

The TMS works in the following ways:

- By proactively responding to, and working to resolve, conflicts using mediation and other conflict intervention strategies where appropriate.
- By engaging with, building and strengthening relationships with Traveller families, Traveller organisations, and with organisations in which Traveller participate.
- By interacting and engaging with all the relevant statutory agencies.
- By implementing alternative dispute resolution through capacity building and training of Travellers and those working with them.
- By raising awareness, and promoting and disseminating **TMS** information to the wider community.

<sup>iii</sup> The **Travellers in Prison Initiative (TPI)** was developed in 2014 as a response to the particular needs and circumstances of Travellers within the 14 prisons in Ireland (and is funded by the St Stephen's Green Trust, the Irish Prison Service and the Irish Probation Service). An inter-agency Steering Group has been appointed to guide the direction of the TPI which includes representatives from Pavee Point, the National Traveller Women's Forum, the Irish Traveller Movement, the Irish Prison Service, the Probation Service, the Irish Penal Reform Trust, Mincéirs Whiden, Exchange House, Traveller

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Counselling Service, the HSE Social Inclusion Unit, IASIO (Irish Association for the Social Integration of Offenders), the Irish Red Cross, the Education and Training Board and the Traveller Mediation Service. The overall aim of the TPI is to embed positive change in policy and practice. The TPI has identified four key action areas that have the potential to inform policy and practice in a pragmatic and sustainable manner. They are:

1. Building a knowledge base about Travellers in prison
2. Increasing and improving access to prison-based services for Travellers
3. Strengthening supports for families of Travellers in prison, and after prison, using a multi-agency approach
4. Strengthening self-identity and self-advocacy for Travellers in prison by main-streaming a peer support model

## Appendix 3

### TMS TRAVELLER PEER MEDIATION PROGRAMME

#### CASTLEREA PRISON

The programme will take place for one day a week over 6 weeks, and will include:

- **Listening & communication exercises/circle work**
- **Exploring the nature of conflict and its effects and consequences**
- **Exploring personal responses to conflict/individual conflict styles/conflict triggers**
- **Session on Irish Traveller culture; and on Traveller-related conflict, and how it is distinct from other types of conflicts**
- **Exercises to demonstrate how conflict escalates & begin to look at de-escalation techniques**
- **Bring participants through the 5 Step Peer Mediation Programme, and introduce the basic concepts of mediation including:**
  - The role of the mediator
  - Confidentiality/issues that can be covered/boundaries
  - Impartiality
  - Listening/reflecting back/ using open questions
  - Moving from positions to interests
  - Re-framing
  - Reaching agreement
- **Practise using these concepts through role-plays and group work**

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